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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, sustainer of humanity, if it were not for Your love, our burdens would be too heavy and the journey would seem too difficult. But because of Your mercies, we can mount up on wings like eagles, run and not become weary, and walk and not faint.

Draw near to our Senators today. Keep them from confusion and perplexity and the fatigue of fruitless quests. Breathe upon their thinking with Your truth and illuminate their understanding with Your light. May the pressures of the world not mold them, but may they receive Your strength so that they can shape our Nation and world according to Your purposes. Lord, maintain in them the fidelity of those to whom much has been given and from whom much will be required. May this be for them a productive day because they have placed their trust in Your strong and guiding hand.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 16, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period for the transaction of morning business until 11 a.m. Morning business will need to cease at 11 a.m. because we have Senator COBURN coming to give a statement at that time, preparatory to a vote that will occur after he completes his remarks. Senators will be permitted during the time until 11 o'clock to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half of that time, the majority will control the next half, and the remaining time will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3288, the Transportation appropriations bill. There will be 30 minutes for Senator COBURN and 10 minutes for Senator MURRAY to debate the pending Coburn amendments. Upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate will proceed to a series of up to five rollcall votes. Therefore, Senators should expect votes beginning around 11:30 a.m. Senator COBURN may not use

all of his time. If that is the case, when he completes his remarks, Senator MURRAY or someone she chooses will speak and then we will start the votes.

Last night, I filed cloture on the committee amendment and the underlying bill. I am confident and hopeful that is not going to be necessary, as I am told we should be able to complete action on this bill today. As a result, there will be a 1 p.m. filing deadline for first-degree amendments to this Transportation bill. We hope we can move immediately to the Interior appropriations bill. We should be able to wrap that up fairly quickly.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the debate over health care continues to be a top concern for most Americans, but it is important to realize that this debate is not taking place in a vacuum. It is taking place in the context of a nation that is increasingly concerned about the size and the scope of government.

Over the past year, Americans have seen the government take over automakers and insurance companies. They have seen government spend hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out banks and other financial institutions. They have seen government run up unprecedented debt. And now they are seeing the government trying to take over health care.

If the White House wants an explanation for all the unrest it is witnessing across the country, all the worry and concerns Americans have about their health care plans, this is a crucial piece. Democrats in Washington may see all these government

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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